

Virginia Board of Education
Student Advisory Committee
Minutes: April 28, 2009

Students in Attendance:

Drake Bishop, Nottoway High School; Meghan Bryan, Eagle Ridge Middle School; Tara Coleman, Council High School; Kevin Kabaria, Richlands Middle School; David Krawczyk, William Fleming High School; Abby Moul, Bruton High School; Nqobile Mthethwa, Prospect Heights Middle School; Kelly Robeson, North Stafford High School, Jose Soto, Bayside Middle School; Kiyoko Timmons, Richmond Community High School; and, Madison Wilson, Harrisonburg High School.

Students Absent:

Calvin Hunt, Millbrook High School

Board of Education Members in Attendance:

Mrs. Eleanor Saslaw, Mrs. Isis Castro

Department of Education Staff in Attendance:

Michelle Vucci, Michelle Parker

Mrs. Parker welcomed the members of the Student Advisory Committee and reviewed the day's activities. Mrs. Saslaw and Mrs. Castro provided the committee with an overview of the Board of Education's expectations for their group reports and presentations.

The Student Advisory Committee convened in their three work groups to discuss the research they had done since the last meeting and to develop their reports and recommendations for presentation to the Board of Education at its meeting on Wednesday, April 29, 2009.

The members of Work Group One developed their position and recommendations regarding increasing the recognition of students in a variety of achievement areas. The members of Work Group Two developed their position and recommendations regarding expanding online education throughout Virginia elementary schools. The members of Work Group Three developed their position and recommendations regarding improving foreign language and technology education and exposure in Virginia public schools.

The entire Student Advisory Committee then convened to hear the presentations from the three work groups and to make any suggestions for changes to the final reports. The

reports for presentation to the Board of Education at its April 29, 2009 meeting are attached. The meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

**Statement from the 2008-2009
Student Advisory Committee
of the
Virginia Board of Education**

Issue of Discussion:

Increasing the recognition of students in a variety of achievement areas.

Background:

The derivative of this project was the realization of the overall lack of scholarships that reward the student for achievement in a variety of areas. In searching for scholarships, students often find that one of the main criteria to qualify is to have financial need. Thus, it has been decided that recognition by the Virginia Department of Education is sought to identify outstanding student achievement without considering finances.

The Student Advisory Committee conducted scholarship searches and found that most scholarships are only available to students based on financial need, such as the Coca-Cola Scholarship. Analyzing the probability of receiving a national scholarship (as they are some of the few that do not require financial need such as the Best Buy Scholarship) one finds the chances of receiving the scholarship are minuscule. In an equation that defines students' attempts in applying for scholarships, the likelihood of receiving a local or state scholarship is greater than receiving a national one.

Our justification for creating this scholarship is to provide an opportunity for students that have saved money over the years for college, but are still in need of funds for continuing education. These students should not be jeopardized in applying for scholarships that require demonstrated financial need. When applying for financial aid, people must disclose all financial assets and scholarship committees consider the money as being solely devoted to post-secondary education, even though that may not be the case.

Position of the Student Advisory Committee:

As a committee, we feel that it is necessary to provide students in the state of Virginia the opportunity to be recognized for their outstanding achievements in specific areas over the years without considering finances.

We want to create a website from the Department of Education recognizing students that have been selected by their school division for excelling in one of the areas that follow: Math, Science and Engineering, History, Foreign Language, Performing Arts (Music, Dance, Theater, Debate), Visual Arts (Architecture, Graphic Design, Painting, Video, Web Design), Literature/ Writing for Publication, Entrepreneurship, Leadership, and Community Service. We would eventually like the program to expand to scholarship offerings so that there are opportunities not limited to financial need. Our achievement

program will give equal opportunity to all students. This program will include statewide recognition for students entering colleges and the workforce. For example, if a student does not excel in academia, but they are very involved in the community, they will be able to showcase their achievement through this recognition program.

Recommendations:

With available resources, the following are our recommendations to the State Board of Education:

- Stage I: Creation of a link on the Department's website with a list of high school students selected by school divisions who have significant achievements in academic and/or extracurricular areas
- Stage II: Further development of the recognition program in cooperation with local school divisions. (The group has submitted criteria for future reference and consideration.)
- Stage III: Pursuit of opportunities for scholarship awards and increased awareness of the recognition program by institutions of higher learning, business and industry, and other entities

Submitted by:

Johnathon (Drake) Bishop
Meghan Bryan
Tara Coleman
Calvin Hunt
Kevin Kabaria
David Krawczyk

Abigail (Abby) Moul
Londeka (Nqobile) Mthethwa
Kelly Robeson
Jose Soto
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Issue of Discussion:

Expanding online education throughout Virginia elementary schools.

Background:

As technological inventions progress, our school systems also progress. Students are exposed more to technology through home and school. Not only is this happening at an older age but also at the elementary grade level. Implementing online education starting in an elementary grade level would better prepare our younger generation for the future. Online learning broadens the educational opportunities and gets children more involved with their surrounding world. Online learning gives students the opportunity to meet more people in their surrounding areas, even as far as other countries. Online learning gives the ability to be able to learn subjects not provided in their own school or community. This provides a better outlook on high school and college and career opportunities in the future. This meets the curriculum of the Virginia Public School Systems, while also making sure to meet the Standards of Learning.

Position:

Through our personal experience with the Virginia Public Schools System, we feel that technology is progressing as a standard tool of learning. Starting online learning at an earlier age will help teachers and students in the classroom. Implementing online classes in elementary schools, will broaden the minds of younger students, and better prepare them for the future. Starting online education at an early age will make the transition to elementary school years a natural process, for both the students and teachers. This is a teaching tool not only for students but teachers as well. We feel that the younger generation is the future of our society, and we need to provide them with the future in technological advances. Within the next decade more and more computers and online education will be used not only in schools but in everyday life.

Recommendations:

With available resources, the following are our recommendations to the State Board of Education:

- Implement online classes and experiences in elementary schools.
- Make the classes more appealing to younger students by including an entertaining curriculum for easier understanding, while grasping students' attention

- Provide a variety of courses
- Provide a special study environment, apart from other classrooms
- Make classes available to every school, leaving the distribution to the school or school district on providing the way of teaching in that particular school or district.
- Provide teachers informational sessions on using the online courses and technology of the courses.
- Provide each school with the newest technology available.

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Issue of Discussion:

Improving the foreign language and technology education and exposure in Virginia public schools with the goal of helping students become bilingual and achieve the level of technology necessary to be competitive in the workplace.

Background:

We examined data of foreign language and technology study throughout schools in Virginia and have found inconsistencies in the number of languages taught and the fluency achieved. Americans are infamous for their negative image in foreign language competence which is especially detrimental in the United States' effort to further globalization.

Position of the Student Advisory Committee:

We feel that to better cooperate and succeed in today's world, it is necessary for Virginia students to become competent in marketable languages and technology. Our project hopes to expand students' knowledge of technology and foreign language. Technology helps us communicate effectively in the global market. Because technology consistently progresses and becomes obsolete so quickly, it is important and necessary to have a continuing and complete technological education. If we teach students to use language and technology at a younger age, they will be more successful citizens and workers in our global society. In an increasingly global environment, we feel that it is imperative that Virginia students contribute to the United States' development towards becoming more cooperative towards other nations and ambassadors of goodwill by learning to communicate in at least one other language.

Recommendations:

With available resources, the following are our recommendations to the State Board of Education:

- Begin instruction in foreign language at an earlier age, as early as Kindergarten
- Supplement current foreign language instruction
 - Language immersion classes
 - Incorporate foreign language instruction with the Standards of Learning for other subjects
 - Before/after school classes in foreign language

- Foreign language technology (e.g. Rosetta Stone, advanced foreign language classes available on Virtual Virginia)
- Extracurricular clubs dedicated to use foreign languages in a realistic environment
- Incorporate more technology into the everyday curriculum of the classroom
 - Use technology for individual/group projects
 - Teachers/school systems to become more aware of how to incorporate relevant technology into instruction to familiarize students with its use (e.g. student and teacher used websites, presentations, etc.)
- In future years, create and execute foreign language SOLs

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